



PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia

NEWSLETTER: JUNE 2015

Warburton Area 11th April

On a perfect autumn day a big group of us (12) went to visit our much missed friend and member Doris Weigert at her new home at Millgrove, near Warburton. We started with the tour of her house and her backyard birds (impressive – King-parrots, pied currawongs, and many more), then walked along the Yarra River behind Warburton township.

The highlights were a motley collection of hybrid mallard/domestic ducks, a juvenile bowerbird, and a plantation of Californian Redwoods, planted in 1922 and a majestic size in less than 100 years.

highlights.

There was very little information on the history of the O'Shannassy Aqueduct at the carpark, but a website – *The Heroes of the Aqueduct*, is worth visiting, it has all the history of the related water storages, and great photos. See <http://oshannassyaqueduct.weebly.com/>

We are returning to the Warburton area in June to look at mosses and bryophytes with Pina Milne, and looking forward to it very much. - **Judy Smart**



Juvenile Satin Bowerbird – Photo by Diane Peters

After lunch we went to the O'shannassy Aqueduct walking track, at the Millgrove end. The view from the carpark over the valley was spectacular, and the walk beside the aqueduct beautiful, with towering pines then eucalypts, and tree ferns. Some interesting and unfamiliar plants were the Muttonwood (*Myrsine howittiana*, formerly *Rapanea*), Tree Lomatia (*Lomatia fraseri*), Silver mistletoe (*Amyema quandang*) and Twining Silkpod climber (*Parsonsia brownii*) – this is also found in Endeavour Fern Gully at Red Hill. The only Lomatia species on the Mornington Peninsula is the holly-leaf *Lomatia ilicifolia*, which is so stunted as to appear near-death usually.

The birds were interesting too – Golden and Rufous whistlers, and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos being the



Photo: Judy Smart

Bird List Warburton Yarra River walk 11th April 2015

Australian Wood Duck	Eastern Spinebill
Mallard	Eastern Yellow Robin
Pacific Black Duck	Magpie-Lark
Hybrid Domestic/Mallard ducks	Grey Fantail
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Grey Butcherbird
Australian King-Parrot	Australian Magpie
Crimson Rosella	Pied Currawong
Laughing Kookaburra	Satin Bowerbird (juvenile)
Superb Fairy-wren	Common Blackbird
Brown Thornbill	Common Myna
Red Wattlebird	

Balnarring & Emu Plains 30th March

Our regular birding day for April was brought forward by a week because of Easter, so fell at the end of March. We began at Balbirirooroo Wetlands in Balnarring, a reliable spot for a great variety of waterbirds, usually including Shelducks. The Shelducks were there, together with an assortment of other ducks including Freckled, Australian Shoveller, Hardhead and both Teal. One Blue-billed Duck was sighted. White-necked and White-faced Herons, Straw-necked and White Ibis, and Yellow-billed Spoonbill were also present.



A fine collection of ducks. Photo by Diane Peters

Around the banks were Moorhen and Swampen, but no small plovers or dotterels were seen. Notable bush birds included Red-browed Finch, Golden Whistler, a number of honeyeaters, and Dusky Woodswallow. Willie Wagtails were prominent on the edges of the water. The total of 46 birds was fairly consistent for the location. We were also delighted to spot a koala.

After lunch we transferred to Emu Plains Reserve, at the Balnarring Racecourse on Coolart Road. Most of us had not previously visited this location, which consists of a messmate woodland, with some thick patches of paperbark around the racetrack and associated equestrian facilities. We added a number of bush birds to the day's list, including

Rufous Whistler and Spotted Pardalote, as well as Wedge-tailed Eagle. A number of butterflies caught our eye, including Meadow Argus and Painted Lady. Also seen was a bush rat. - **Lee Denis**



Koala at Balnarring. Photo by Diane Peters

Emu Plains Racecourse 30th March 2015

Wedge-tailed Eagle	Golden Whistler
Rainbow Lorikeet	Rufous Whistler
Crimson Rosella	Grey Shrike-thrush
Eastern Rosella	Magpie-Lark
Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Brown Thornbill	Dusky Woodswallow
Little Wattlebird	Grey Butcherbird
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
White-eared Honeyeater	Little Raven
New Holland Honeyeater	Common Starling

Bird List Balnarring Wetlands 30th March 2015

Blue-billed Duck	White-faced Heron	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Noisy Miner	Dusky Woodswallow
Freckled Duck	White-necked Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird
Australian Shelduck	Australian White Ibis	Crimson Rosella	White-eared Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Australian Wood Duck	Straw-necked Ibis	Eastern Rosella	New Holland Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Australasian Shoveler	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Yellow Robin	Welcome Swallow
Grey Teal	Purple Swampen	White-browed scrub wren	Golden Whistler	Common Blackbird
Chestnut Teal	Dusky Moorhen	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Shrike-thrush	
Hardhead	Eurasian Coot	Brown Thornbill	Magpie-Lark	
Hoary-headed Grebe	Masked Lapwing	Red Wattlebird	Grey Fantail	
Little Pied Cormorant	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Little Wattlebird	Willie Wagtail	

John Roth *Lord Howe Island – Paradise – Underwater and Above* 8th April 2015

John has previously spoken to us on the underwater life of the Mornington Peninsula. John has visited Lord Howe Island four times in eight years, which indicates how much he loves it there. The island is 600km east of Port Macquarie, and is subtropical, with the southernmost coral reef in the world. The reef has great diversity, being a meeting of tropical, sub-tropical and tropical sea life. It was declared a World Heritage Site in 1982.

The island is relatively recent, created by volcanic activity 7 million years ago as part of the Southern volcanic area which includes New Zealand. It is crescent shaped, following the shape of a heavily eroded shield volcano and only 11 k long, and 2 k wide at most. It was discovered by Europeans in 1788, and is one of few places never previously occupied by humans.

The island is part of NSW, and has a permanent population of 350 residents, and a cap on tourist numbers of 400 at any one time, to preserve the island's natural values. 70% of the land is reserved as forest, the rest is farmed or human settlement.

There are 113 endemic plants, many of which are closely related to Australian, NZ and Pacific Island plants, with local differences, such as the Lord Howe Island banyan, which is like a Morton Bay fig, with aerial roots. One specimen can cover two hectares. Pandanus there grows to 15m. A well-known endemic is the Kentia palm, found only on LHI – growing and exporting the seeds for the indoor plant trade has been a major earner for the Island.

An unusual micro climate on LHI is the orographic cloud

forest on Mt Gower. The mountain summit (875m) is covered in cloud 60% of the time, even when the rest of the island is sunny. The cloud forest has its own plants, some found nowhere else, such as another two palms, the large and little mountain palm, as well as many ferns, mosses and orchids.

There are no snakes, the only mammal is a bat, but there are 186 birds, many endemic. The red-tailed tropic bird nests in the cliffs, sooty terns in the sand dunes, masked boobies on a promontory, and the beautiful and tame white terns nest on bare branches of the Norfolk Island pines in the township. There are 3 species of shearwater, many other seabirds, as well as land birds such as the LHI currawong. One conspicuous success is the flightless LHI wood hen, reduced to a population of 30 birds on the summit of Mt Gower, but by eliminating feral goats, pigs and cats, plus a captive breeding program, it was restored to a healthy population of 250 plus.

Another endemic is the LHI stick insect, an enormous stick insect, wiped out on LHI by rats, but found surviving on Balls Pyramid, a tall rock stack nearby. These have been successfully captive bred, but need the rat population to be controlled before re-introduction.

The underwater life is spectacular and accessible too. Large fish swim around your legs in the shallows at Neds Beach, accustomed to being fed. Snorkelling straight off the beach on both sides of the island is to wade into a beautiful world of fish, large and small, such as lion fish and wrasse, harmless Galapagos sharks, colourful sponges and corals. -
Judy Smart

Canadian Bay Conservation Day: August 16

On **Sunday 16 August** the Mornington Peninsula Shire, in conjunction with the Friends of Williams Road Beach, will hold two woody weed working bees- adults only. These working bees will take place between **9.30 am & 12.30 pm** and between **1.30 pm & 4.30 pm**. Please register for these working bees in the Williams Road cliff top car park, **Melway 101 E9**.

These initiatives will further Coastcare funded work recently undertaken on the cliff top south of the car park. The Shire has subsequently put extensive time into creating access for volunteers attending the working bees on 16 August. It is hoped that, by the end of 2016, Coastal Headland Scrub will be substantially restored through to Glen Shian Lane. This will enable the community to walk through restored habitat from Jacksons Road to Glen Shian Lane. Your support would make a very big contribution to this goal.

Over the lunch hour, a free sausage sizzle will be held at the scout hall (access via the north side of the car park). Roberto from the Connies will, thanks to Fourness Funding provided by SPIFFA, be present to entertain all who attend. A range of displays and activities will take place in the hall throughout the day. This will include a wide-game involving scouts. Should any adults which to involve their children or grandchildren in this event they are most welcome. However, they must be supervised and, of course, unless they are involved with scouts, will not be covered by insurance. The scout event commences at the scout hall.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ann Scholes via email



Seaford Wetlands

4th May

Ten members turned out on a fine and warm day with no wind and a clear sky. The chief attraction at this time of the year is Flame Robins. Last year we saw only a single Flame Robin at the wetlands – this year we were more successful with 3 males and 4 females.



Flame Robin – Photo: Diane Peters

Beginning at the Austin Rd viewing platform we noted that the water level was lower than usual – this probably contributed to the numbers of Black-winged Stilts in the water, and both Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels in some numbers around the water's edge. Grey and Chestnut Teal were also present.

We then walked a circuit of the southern part of the wetland, seeing the Flame Robins near the centre. A highlight was a close view of a White-bellied Sea-eagle soaring above the wetland. Other raptors included Wedge-tailed Eagle, Swamp Harrier, Nankeen Kestrel, and Black-

shouldered Kite. There was also possibly a Brown Falcon, but no consensus was reached.

Along the western side the pond held thirty or so Pink-eared Ducks, together with the Grey and Chestnut Teal. Three or four Australasian Shovellers were also seen.



Pink-eared Duck – Photo: Diane Peters

After lunch we continued through the Downs Estate and along Eel Race Drain, adding Great Egret, Little Pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron and, passing overhead, a flock of Long-billed Corellas.- **Lee Denis**

Bird List For Seaford Wetlands 4th May 2015

Australian Wood Duck	Australian White Ibis	Black-fronted Dotterel	Brown Thornbill	Grey Fantail
Pacific Black Duck	Black-shouldered Kite	Red-kneed Dotterel	Red Wattlebird	Willie Wagtail
Australasian Shoveler	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Masked Lapwing	Little Wattlebird	Grey Butcherbird
Grey Teal	Swamp Harrier	Silver Gull	Noisy Miner	Australian Magpie
Chestnut Teal	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Spotted Turtle-Dove	White-plumed Honeyeater	Little Raven
Pink-eared Duck	Nankeen Kestrel	Crested Pigeon	White-naped honeyeater	European Goldfinch
Hoary-headed Grebe	Purple Swamphen	Long-billed Corella	Cisticola	Welcome Swallow
Little Pied Cormorant	Dusky Moorhen	Rainbow Lorikeet	Flame Robin - 3 male, 4 female	Common Blackbird
Australian Pelican	Eurasian Coot	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Shrike-thrush	Common Starling
White-faced Heron	Black-winged Stilt	Spotted Pardalote	Magpie-Lark	Common Myna
Great Egret				

Peninsula Gardens 16th May 2015

We had never visited Peninsula Gardens before, so we were interested to see the reserve. It has an active Friends Group, as we could see when we got there, because there were few weeds, and lots of nest boxes.

The area had been part of a holiday resort, with a caravan park, picnic grounds, golf course, and shopping centre. (Trivia: Midnight Oil played there in 1982) The golf course is now a housing estate, and the part now reserved was donated by the developer for open space. You wouldn't know of these past uses because re-growth had covered most traces.

We walked through to the creek line and fern gully and up the back of the block where magnificent old grass trees dominated. We ran out of tracks so followed the wallaby tracks through the bracken, until we found ourselves back on the road.

The birds were plentiful, see list attached, with highlights being a mistletoebird and red-browed finches.

Bird List: Peninsula Gardens Rosebud, 16 May 2015	
Wedge-tailed Eagle	New Holland Honeyeater
Galah	Eastern Spinebill
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Eastern Yellow Robin
Rainbow Lorikeet	Grey Shrike-thrush

Crimson Rosella	Grey Fantail
Laughing Kookaburra	Australian Magpie
Spotted Pardalote	Grey Currawong
Brown Thornbill	Red-browed Finch
Red Wattlebird	Mistletoebird
White-eared Honeyeater	Common Blackbird

After lunch we had a look at Betty Clift Reserve, where we only saw Little Wattlebird, New Holland Honeyeater and Noisy Miner; then the Truemans Rd part of Tootgarook Wetlands. We saw a family of spiny-cheeked honeyeaters, golden-headed cisticolas, and a black-shouldered kite. I took a wrong turn and led us through the old tip, over building rubble and through long grass.

Bird List Tootgarook Wetlands - Truemans Rd	
Golden-headed Cisticola	Eastern Rosella
Black-shouldered Kite	Noisy Miner
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Indian Mynah
Crested Pigeon	

It was a day of adventure or poor navigation, depending on your point of view. - **Judy Smart**

Roger Standen *What are we missing out on – Caretaking at the Broome Bird Observatory over Summer* 13th May

Roger has previously spoken to us on his Newhaven and Western Australian bird surveys. This trip was to be caretaker at the Broome Bird Observatory for 6 weeks so that the wardens could have a holiday, while there were no visitors. It was an opportunity to see the tropics in a different season to the usual winter visit.

The Broome Bird Observatory is away from Broome township and the Cable Beach area, on Roebuck Bay next to the flood plain and pindan vegetation. The temperature was a stifling 40-42° every day until the rain started, when it cooled down.

Roger was fascinated by the insect life, and used a macro lens to photograph in great detail sights not seen with the naked eye, such as a wolf spider feasting on insects, a jumping spider mimicking a golden-tail ant, antlions, butterflies, scorpions, paper wasps, and great carpenter bees, which burrow into dead wood, and are three times the size of honey bees.

He was disappointed in the lack of reptiles, but still showed

us Burton's snake-lizard, frill necked lizards, Gilberts dragon, the Top End firetail skink, Stimson's python and white-bellied mangrove snake, plus giant frogs and green tree frogs.



Check your shoes carefully! - Photo: Roger Standen

The birds – the waders were in mixed flocks of tens of

thousands of birds, and when the rains came (they had 170ml in three days, in the second week of January) they brought birds to the flooded plain – glossy ibis, white-winged black terns, little curlew and big flocks of oriental pratincole. Other birds photographed were blue-winged kookaburras nesting in termite mounds, pheasant coucals, brown goshawk antics at the water dish and yellow chats.



Oriental Pratincole – Photo: Roger Standen

A major highlight was the crabs – Roger was very fortunate to see the land crabs moving in great numbers after the rain started, from the plain along the tracks to the sea to spawn, then all returning to the plains. Because the road to Broome is closed after rain, most people would never see this sight, reminiscent of the famous Christmas Island crab migration.



Crabs on the move – Photo: Roger Standen

Other highlights were photographs of the spectacular scenery – red cliffs, pink water after rain, the tide going out for 1 1/2 kilometres, monsoon clouds and the blue spotted mud skippers in the mud.



Mud Skipper – Photo: Roger Standen

It was enough to inspire you to put up with the heat in order to experience Broome in summer. - **Judy Smart**

Devilbend 9th June

Originally we were meant to join the monthly bird count at Devilbend Reservoir, but circumstances lead to us being the bird count. Only three members were able to attend, and did our best to carry out a count. A scope is necessary to do a thorough count of birds on the water, and since we didn't have one we could only provide a lower estimate for some species, particularly coots.

We were able to identify some 160 Blue-billed Ducks – there could have been more – along with 38 Black Swans and 37 Little Pied Cormorants. We were a little surprised at the number of Silver Gulls – we counted 75 – but as usual the most numerous species was Eurasian Coot – we counted 350 and could see many more across the far side of the reservoir – too far away to count.

The usual birds were seen – Great Crested Grebes, Musk

Duck (although only one), Little Black and Great cormorants in numbers, numbers of Masked Lapwings (we counted 35, but could see many more lurking amongst the reeds far across the water), White-faced Herons and Great Egret.

Birds not often seen before at this location (although by no means unusual) included Pacific Black Ducks, Chestnut Teal, Hardhead, and Shelduck.

We were pleased to see the pair of White-bellied Sea-eagles soaring overhead for some time, being harassed by Little Ravens. Other raptors included Black-shouldered Kite (a pair and a juvenile) and Swamp Harrier.

The most common bush birds were Superb Fairy-wren (29 counted); Red-browed Finch and Brown-headed

Honeyeater were seen – the latter a first for one of our members. The species total for this site came to 44 with the addition of a Fan-tailed Cuckoo which came to watch us having lunch.



Great Crested Grebe at Devilbend – Photo: Diane Peters

After lunch we travelled to Bittern Reservoir where we added four new species for the day amongst the 18 species observed, most notably two male Mistletoebirds near the car park. As at Devilbend, the most numerous birds were Eurasian Coots, with over 100 counted. Four Musk Ducks were seen here, together with some Grey Teal.

Other sightings of interest at this location were two species of fungus: the Pine Mushroom *Lactarius deliciosus*, also known as the Saffron Milk Cap, a species introduced to Australia for its mycorrhizal association with conifers, especially *Pinus radiata*, and a large specimen of the pored (bolete) fungus *Phlebopus marginatus*, Australia's largest terrestrial fungus, which forms a mycorrhizal association with eucalypts. This one was about 25 cm high with a cap of about 40 cm diameter. - **Lee Denis**



Phlebopus marginatus – Photo: Lee Denis

Bird List for Devilbend Reservoir, 9 June 2015

Blue-billed Duck	Little Pied Cormorant	Swamp Harrier	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Magpie-Lark
Musk Duck	Little Black Cormorant	Purple Swamphen	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Fantail
Black Swan	Great Cormorant	Eurasian Coot	Brown Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird
Australian Shelduck	Australian Pelican	Masked Lapwing	Little Wattlebird	Australian Magpie
Pacific Black Duck	White-faced Heron	Silver Gull	Noisy Miner	Little Raven
Chestnut Teal	Great Egret	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Hardhead	Royal Spoonbill	Galah	New Holland Honeyeater	Common Blackbird
Hoary-headed Grebe	Black-shouldered Kite	Crimson Rosella	Eastern Yellow Robin	Common Starling
Great Crested Grebe	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Eastern Rosella	Grey Shrike-thrush	

Bird List For Bittern Reservoir 9 June 2015

Musk Duck	Little Pied Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	White-eared Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Black Swan	Swamp Harrier	Crimson Rosella	New Holland Honeyeater	Mistletoebird
Grey Teal	Purple Swamphen	Brown Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	
Chestnut Teal	Eurasian Coot	Red Wattlebird	Grey Fantail	

Pina Milne

Mosses, Liverworts, Hornworts and Lichens

June 10th and 13th 2015

Pina spoke to our Club last year on the work of the Herbarium. Previous to that, back in 1996, she spoke to us about Bryophytes, and took us to Cement Creek, where she did a lot of her research for her PhD. It was so interesting that I have always wanted to do it again, and Pina was kind enough to do a re-run.



*Embankment behind the old toilet block at Cement Creek
– Photo: Lee Denis*

Bryophyte is the collective term for mosses, liverworts and hornworts (but not lichens, more about them later). They photosynthesize like all plants but have no cuticle layer and so absorb water or moisture through their leaves. Their roots, or rhizoids, are only for anchorage, not to collect nutrients or water. They are not confined to cool damp conditions, but occur in every habitat except marine, including deserts. They survive dry or hot conditions by dormancy, dessication and other survival mechanisms.

Mosses are the most numerous in species – worldwide 10,000, Australia has 1000. Liverworts worldwide 6 to 8000, Australia 870, and hornworts are much scarcer – worldwide about 100, and Australia 12. The largest bryophyte in Australia is *Dawsonia superba* which grows slowly to 30cm and looks like a pine seedling.

Liverworts have two forms – thallose, or flat to the ground, and leafy, which can resemble mosses.

Mosses and liverworts can reproduce both sexually and asexually. An example of asexual reproduction is a piece breaking off and landing on a new home. All three reproduce sexually by gametes both male and female, produced by gametophytes, and when they fertilize each other they create a sporophyte or spore capsule which sits above the plant and from which the wind disperses the spores.

Hornworts are flat to the ground until their sporophytes sprout up in a hornlike structure. As we found at Cement Creek, they are hard to find unless they have sporophytes,

and even then being tiny take some finding.

There are also moss-like plants – for example Spanish moss, which is a flowering plant; filmy ferns, tiny and soft, but which are ferns; and Club moss, which we saw at Bunyip and is a Lycopod, or a stage between ferns and mosses.

Lichens are part of the fungi kingdom – they are a symbiotic association between fungi and algae or cyanobacteria. There are three forms – fruticose, which are complex and upright; foliose, or leaf like, which are flatter but still complex; and crustose, or crust like, such as the orange lichens on granite boulders at Wilsons Promontory. They reproduce by fruiting bodies like fungi.

Why are these organisms important?

They contribute to biodiversity. They collect nutrients and carbon dioxide. They protect soils from water and wind, are first colonisers after fire, soil disturbance and logging, and create microhabitats for seed germination and shelter for invertebrates and insects. They are bio-indicators of pollution. They are also fascinating!

For further information the Australian National Botanic Gardens website has great information – <http://www.cpbr.gov.au/bryophyte>

On the Saturday following her talk Pina led another excursion to Cement Creek to share some of her enthusiasm for her subject. Nine of us drove up to the Rainforest Gallery Skywalk car park at Cement Creek, which is near Warburton on the Donna Buang Rd. It was a lovely 17° in Melbourne, but a cool 8° at Cement Creek.



Dawsonia superba – Photo: Diane Peters

Pina started at the roadside embankment which supported a rich growth of our tallest moss, *Dawsonia superba* var *pulchra*; Pina showed us the female plant with its

Other plants of interest were a Mountain Correa in flower (*Correa lawrenciana*), Tree Lomatia (*Lomatia fraseri*) and Banyalla (*Pittosporum bicolor*), and numerous fern species including the tree ferns *Dicksonia antarctica* and *Cyathea australis*, the Kangaroo Fern *Microsporium pustulatum*, and a number of species of *Blechnum*. Other fungi included the puffball *Morganella*, the lichenised fungus *Lichenomphalia*, and the tiny yellow jelly fungus *Heterotextus*.

We were very grateful to Pina for giving up her Saturday to show us the bryophytes and share her knowledge with us. -
Judy Smart & Lee Denis

† Scott, Stone & Rosser, *The Mosses of Southern Australia*



Mosses and lichens – Photo: Lee Denis



One more from Broome Bird Observatory – Photo: Roger Standen

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Activities can be found at our website.

President:
Mrs Pat Gomm

Treasurer:
Ms Linda Edwards

All correspondence to
Secretary
Mrs Judy Smart

Annual Subs due July

Adult	\$25
Concession	\$20

Newsletter edited by Lee Denis

www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au

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